

**In the Claims:**

Please amend claims as follows:

1. (Cancelled)

2. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for creating a virtual environment in an interconnected global information network system, comprising:

an input device arrangement obtaining a user preference and a request, the input arrangement including a remote control;

an output device arrangement presenting selected remote data obtained as a function of at least one of the user preference and the request from at least one remote location, the output arrangement including a visual display device and an audio arrangement; and

a set-top box connected to the input arrangement and the output arrangement, the set-top box including (1) a memory device for storing the user preference, (2) an artificial intelligence engine embedded in a set-top box configured to select and obtain remote data, and (3) that identifies content on the global information network system;

~~a video component;~~

~~an audio component;~~

~~a remote control;~~

~~an interconnected global information network processor operably connected to said video and audio components;~~

~~a network communication arrangement access box having a memory and telephonically connected to the at least one remote location via a communications network, the network arrangement filtering data transferred between the set-top box and the at least one remote location. Internet access server, and~~

~~a television having a display electrically connected to the network access box;~~

~~wherein the Internet access server communicates directly with the Internet, the network access box controls the display, and the network access box communicates with the Internet access server.~~

3. (New) A method, comprising the steps of:
  - communicating with a participant using an input/output arrangement to obtain at least one of background information and preference information;
  - generating a participant profile as a function of the background information, the participant profile including at least one of a participant identity and participant personal information;
  - creating a virtual reality environment using at least one of the participant profile and the preference information, the virtual reality environment including a virtual personal assistant and being presented to the participant via the input/output arrangement;
  - receiving a request from the participant using the virtual personal assistant;
  - processing the request using an artificial intelligence engine and at least one of the preference information and the participant profile to generate request data;
  - obtaining a response data as a function of the request data from at least one remote location via a communications network, the response data including at least one of information, product data and service data; and
  - providing the response data to the participant via the virtual reality environment.
4. (New) The method of claim 3, wherein the virtual personal assistant is configured to converse with the participant using a natural language.
5. (New) The method of claim 3, wherein the virtual personal assistant includes a further artificial intelligence engine adapted to recognize a plurality of natural languages.

6. (New) The method of claim 3, wherein the request data is configured to restrict the transfer of the participant identity and the participant personal information via the communications network.
7. (New) The method of claim 3, wherein at least one of the participant profile, the virtual electronic environment and the virtual reality assistant are continuously adjusted as functions of at least one of the request data, the preference information, and the background information.
8. (New) The method of claim 3, wherein the processing step includes the following sub-steps :
  - encrypting at least a portion of the request data; and
  - transmitting the encrypted request data to the at least one remote location via the communications network.
9. (New) The method of claim 3, wherein the virtual personal assistant is an avatar including audio and visual representations.
10. (New) The method of claim 3, wherein the participant profile further includes data pertaining to the participant's preferences for at least one of information, product data and service data.
11. (New) The method of claim 3, wherein the artificial intelligence engine includes at least one of a phonetic parsing module, a list of frequently used vocabulary in a selected geographic region, a speech recognition module, a digital video and audio recognition module, a data mining module, a searching module, a knowledge database and an experts database.
12. (New) A system, comprising:
  - a memory storage device storing a participant profile generated as a function of background information, the participant profile including at least one of a participant identity and participant personal information;

an input/output arrangement communicating with the participant to obtain at least one of the background information and preference information, the input/output arrangement configured to present a virtual reality environment created as a function of at least one of the participant profile and the preference information, the virtual reality environment including a virtual personal assistant which receives a request from the participant;

an artificial intelligence engine processing the request to generate request data as a function of the request and at least one of the preference information and the participant profile; and

a communications arrangement connected to at least one remote location via a communications network to obtain response data, the response data is a function of the request data and includes at least one of information, product data and service data.

13. (New) The system of claim 12, wherein the virtual personal assistant includes a further artificial intelligence engine adapted to recognize a plurality of natural languages.

14. (New) The system of claim 12, wherein the request data is configured to restrict the transfer of the participant identity and the participant personal information via the communications network.

15. (New) The system of claim 12, wherein at least one of the participant profile, the virtual reality environment and the virtual reality assistant are continuously adjusted as functions of at least one of the request data, the preference information, and the background information.

16. (New) The system of claim 12, wherein the artificial intelligence engine is configured to encrypt at least a portion of the request data and transmit the encrypted request data to at least one remote location via the communications network.

17. (New) The system of claim 12, wherein the virtual personal assistant is an avatar including audio and visual representations.

18. (New) The system of claim 12, wherein the virtual reality environment includes a selection menu for at least one of information, product data and service data.
19. (New) The system of claim 12, wherein the artificial intelligence engine includes at least one of a phonetic parsing module, a list of frequently used vocabulary in a selected geographic region, a speech recognition module, a digital video and audio recognition module, a data mining module, a searching module, a knowledge database and an experts database.
20. (New) The system of claim 12, wherein the input/output arrangement includes at least one of a visual display unit, a microphone, an audio output device and a pointing device.
21. (New) The system of claim 12, wherein the system is a set-top box.
22. (New) A system comprising a participant premise equipment (PPE) connected to an input/output arrangement, the PPE including a memory arrangement to store a set of instructions and a processor to executed the set of instruction, the set of instructions being operable to:
- communicate with a participant using the input/output arrangement to obtain at least one of background information and preference information;
  - generate a participant profile as a function of the background information, the participant profile including at least one fo a participant identity and participant personal information;
  - create a virtual reality environment using at least one of the participant profile and the preference information, the virtual reality environment including a virtual personal assistant and being presented to the participant via the input/output arrangement;
  - receive a request from the participant using the virtual personal assistant;
  - process the request using an artificial intelligence engine and at least one of the preference information and the participant profile to generate request data,
  - obtain a response data as a function of the request data from at least one remote location via a communications network, the response data including at least one of information, product data and service data; and
  - provide the response data to the participant via the virtual reality environment.

23. (New) The system of claim 22, wherein the PPE is a set-top box.